

Last Part of the Quran: A Spiritual Exegesis

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How I wrote it

I followed the tafsir named *Tafsir al-Mazhari* written by the great Mujaddidi sufi saint Qadhi Sanaullah Panipathi who was also a great alim of the Hanafi Madhdhab. My sufi shaykh considers this to be the best tafsir ever as it contains the sufi wisdom of the great mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi in addition to a comprehensive knowledge of all the tafsirs before as it was written by a great scholar. So outwardly, Hazrat Panipathi is supervising my translation and exegesis and inwardly my blessed sufi shaykh is supervising it.

Many verses had several different meanings and then I took the meaning that appealed to me the most, and those often had the most spiritual interpretation.

When I'm asking people to review the book, I'm requesting them only to make suggestions to rephrase it in English, not at all to suggest a different meaning from the original Arabic than what I arrived. Because I arrived there by translating from a meaning of that verse in the *Tafsir al-Mazhari* and so I believe that there is no mistake there --- if you have a different meaning, then its only because that the verse has several valid meanings.

1 the Opener (Fatiha)

Bismillahi 'r-Rahmani 'r-Rahim

In the name of God [Allah, Alaha, Elohim] the all-merciful and compassionate.

1. [O humankind! Pray!] All praise¹ is solely for God² [Allah³, Alaha⁴, Elohim⁵], the lord⁶ of the cosmos 2. the all-merciful and the compassionate 3. the owner⁷ of the judgment day. 4. We worship only you and we seek only your help. 5. Guide⁸ us onto the straight and well-tested path⁹ 6. a path traversed by those whom you have

¹The prophet said, *Praise is the foundation of gratefulness. The slave who does not praise God, he does not show the least gratefulness to him (Al-hamd ra's al-shukr. Ma shukr Allah `abdun, la yahmaduhu)* (Abdu'l-razzaq narrates in *Jami'i Baihaqi* in *Shu'abu'l-Iman*, both from `Abdullah ibn `Umar, Suyuti called it *hasan* in *Jam'i'l-Saghir*, 3835) (TM)

²The word God should be used to translate Allah in English, else it will communicate to the listener a subliminal message: *My God is different from your God, and you can tell by his different name.* So, to do use the term Allah is inaccurate, and worse, it builds a barrier and enmity precisely where there should be a bond and amity. (IA)

³Allah does seem to be a proper name for God. This word has cognates in the other Semitic languages. However, the *Tafsir al-Mazhari* says that Allah etymologically derives from *al* (the definite article) + *ilah* (object of worship). In the Quran, Allah is both used as a proper name of God, as in the formula *la ilaha illa 'Llah*, and it is also used as a word that *object of worship* referring to its root meaning, *He Allah is in the heavens and the earth (Wa hua 'Llahu fi l-samawati wa fi l-ard)*. (Q 6:3) (TM)

⁴Alaha is the Aramaic cognate of Allah and that is how Jesus called God. (IA)

⁵Elohim is the Hebrew cognate of Allah where the plural suffix *im* is appended. That plural suffix means that Eloah is highly honored. It does not mean that God is plural, and so it is treated as a singular according to the rules of the Hebrew grammar. (IA)

⁶Rabb means lord, owner or one who nurtures

⁷Maalik means owner while malik means king or emperor (TM)

⁸The believers should ask for more guidance, as the mainstream Sunnis believe that God's mercy and guidance is infinite.

⁹I am translating *sirat* as the well-tested path. Quran can be recited in seven systems of pronunciation, traditionally called *recitations* or *qira'at*, and although the predominant Hafs recitation spells the *s* of *sirat* as *saad*, there are alternatives.

blessed¹⁰ 7. not the trail of those who have displeased you; or they who have fallen from the way¹¹. (Amin)

The owner of the judgment day

The owner of the judgment day (*maliki yawmi 'l-din*): Imam Ahmad narrates from Malik ibn Dinar that referring to this verse, the prophet said: *Surely it is in the Jewish scriptures (Innahu fi 'l-taurat)*. The linear translation of *maliki yawmi 'l-din* into Hebrew would be *melekh yom hadin* which means *king of day of judgment*. However, in the Torah, *the day of judgment* is usually called *the day of the lord*. It is mentioned in Joel 2:31; Ezekiel 13:5; Isaiah 2:12. For example, this verse could come from Isaiah 2:12, *For the the lord of heaven's army shall have his day against all who are arrogant and conceited and all who are proud of themselves (they will be humbled)*. Here, the day of the lord of heaven's army means the judgment day.

78. the Fearful News (Naba)

Section 1

News of the final days

1. About what are [the Meccans] asking one another? 2. It is about the fearful news [of the final days: destruction, resurrection, judgment.] 3. on which the [believers of Mecca] differ from [its idolaters]. 4. Never! [The idolaters of Mecca are wrong and] they will soon come to know [when they die and reach the world of the grave]. 5. I repeat. Never! They will soon come to know [again, when they reach the day of destruction].

God can re-create

6. Have I not made the earth as a wide and open expanse 7. and the mountains as pegs? 8. And I have created [you, humankind] in pairs [of males and females], 9. and sleep so that you may rest. 10. I have made the night as a cloak [to cover you while you rest] 11. and the day for making a living. 12. I have constructed above you seven strong [skies] 13. and I have made [the sun as] a lamp that illuminates [you] 14. and I pour down rain from the clouds in torrents 15. by which I produce grain and vegetables, 16. and dense, luxuriant gardens. [If I, God can create all that, I can also re-create all that on the judgment day. So why would you not believe?]

(IA) Ibn Kathir pronounced it as *sin*. That *sirat* with *sin* means *to swallow*; so *sarata al-ta`ama* mean *to swallow the food*. And the path on which a large number of pedestrians tread, that path is called *al-tariqu yasruti 'l-sabila*. (TM)

¹⁰Blessed were the prophets and their companions. Blessed were the final prophet Muhammad and his companions. Today, the true sufi shaykhs are the deputies of the prophets --- they tread on the prophets path and they are the ones who are blessed. We need to follow their path if we seek God's good-pleasure. In the future will come prophet Jesus in his second coming and his companions who will be blessed. (IA)

¹¹These two verses condemns, in general, all unbelievers, sinners and believers who have deviated from the tradition of the prophet. For example, about murderers, it is said in the Quran, *and anger of God be on them (wa ghadiballahu 'ala'ihim)* (*Q 4:93*) and for unbelievers and deviants, it is said, *so what is there after the truth but error (fa-madha ba`da 'l-haqqa illa 'l-dalala)* (*Q 10:32*) and *whose works in the earthly life are erroneous (alladhina dalla sa`uhum fi 'l-hayawati 'l-dun`ya)* (*Q 18:104*) (TM)

Judgment day

17. Indeed, the judgment day has been set already [and it is inevitable] 18. On that day, the trumpet will be blown and you will all congregate in large crowds. 19. The sky will be opened and it will spring open many doors, 20. and the mountains will shifted. They will be [crushed into powder that would float in the air] looking like mirages.

Gehenna

21. Indeed! The Gehenna is lying in wait, 22. a place for the transgressors to go 23. where they will remain for ages. 24. There they will taste neither any coolness nor any drink that will satisfy [their thirst] 25. except boiling liquid or freezing fluid. 26. That will be an appropriate compensation [for their sins.] 27. They certainly were not worried that their accounts of deeds would be taken. 28. and they firmly rejected my commands. 29. [They will be disappointed as] I have recorded all of their [bad deeds] serially in a record. 30. So have a taste [of hell]! I will even increase this torture.

Section 2

Paradise

31.Indeed, the the pious will realize triumph. 32. They will have picturesque walled gardens and vineyards 33. youthful, well-matched companions 34. and cups that fill up in their hands. 35. There they will not hear any idle gossip or untruthful words 36. It will be a prize from your lord and a great gift¹².

Day of the mustering

37. None could even appeal to the all-merciful who is lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. 38. That day, the spirit [Gabriel] and the angels will stand in ranks. None shall speak unless the all-merciful permits and he will speak the truth.

Path of success

39. That day is sure to come. So whoever wants may take refuge in his lord [by following prophet Muhammad and his deputies who are those sufi shaykhs who have realized perfection¹³]. 40. Indeed, I am warning you of a torture that will come soon. That day man will face what his hands have done. The unfaithful will exclaim: *How I wish that I were dust!*

¹² Pls see the section on the *Perfections of prophethood*

¹³Deputies of the prophet are those sufi shaykhs who have realized perfection --- they are the ones who have realized both type of knowledge that the prophet taught the companions: the outer knowledge (*'ilmu'l-lisan*) [i.e. Quran, hadith, jurisprudence etc,] and the inner knowledge (*'ilmu'l-qalb*) [the science of purifying the inner realm]. They are the true deputies of the prophet in line with the hadith, The scholars are the heirs of the prophet. Here the “scholars” refer to those scholars who possess both types of knowledge that the prophet taught i.e. the true sufi shaykhs. If the scholar possess only one type of knowledge then he is not a heir as a heir inherits all.

Perfections of prophethood

People whom God has drawn near him (muqarrabin) will receive blessings far more than the ordinary pious, as the prophet said, *Do not curse my companions. If you [ordinary Muslims of the later era] spend gold equal to the Uhud-mountain in charity, you would not be able to rise up them when they spend a small amount, or even half of it.*¹⁴

The great Mujaddid taught us, *All the companions were permanently drowned in the self-disclosure of the person of God (tajalli al-dhati) permanently, because they had realized the perfections of prophethood (kamalatin nubuwat). Many of the followers and few of them who followed them were also so. They were the ones who were drawn near God. After these three generations, the light from this magnificent felicity waned, and its effect lessened. After a thousand years had elapsed after the hegira, exalted God, by his mercy, created some honorable masters and bestowed them the perfection that the first generation had [i.e. the perfections of prophethood (kamalat al-nubuwat)].*

It happens as the prophet prophesied, *An analogy for my community is the rain. One does not know if its beginning is better or its end*¹⁵. The prophet said, *Rejoice! Hear the good news! An analogy of my community is the rain-cloud. When it pours rain, none can perceive if its beginning is better or the end. Or another analogy is an orchard. One group eats its fruits in one season, and another group eats them in another.*¹⁶ Also the prophet said, *In the last era, a group will come in of my community, who will receive merit as the people of the first era received merit.*¹⁷

It may be noted that these ascended masters with the perfections of prophethood are the great Mujaddid and his major disciples in the Mujaddidi sufi tariqa. And also Imam Mahdi, and the companions of prophet Jesus after his second coming. It is they who are the most exalted saints, after the companions.

79. The Angels Who Take Away the Souls (Nazi`at)

Section 1

I Swear

1.I swear by the [angels] who take away the souls [of sinning humans] pulling them out harshly 2. and by the [angels] who take them away [from pious humans] loosening them gently 3. and by [the angels] who glide like swimmers [and go about doing their chores in God's commands] 4. and by [the angels] who move swiftly as if in a race 5. and by [the angels] who administer the affairs [of the cosmos].

Day of the Mustering

6. That will be the day of the mustering when a violent convulsion will shake [the world] 7. and it will be followed by more convulsions one after another. 8. That day hearts will tremble terribly, 9. their eyes will show fear. 10. They will exclaim [in surprise]: *Are we*

¹⁴La tasubbu ashabi. Fa-law anna ahadukum anfaqa mithla uhudin dhahaban ma balagha mudda ahadihim wa la nisfayhi Hazrat Abu Sa'id Khudri narrates in Bukhari, Muslim, Bukhari: Kitab Fada'il ashab al-nabi, chapter Qawl al-nabi, "Law kuntu muttahkadha qalilan," 3673; Muslim: Kitab Fada'il al-sahaba, chapter Tahrim sab al-sahaba, 2540.

¹⁵Mithl ummati ka-mithl al-matar. La yadri awwaluhu khayr aw akhiruhu Tirmidhi narrates from Anas, Kitab: Al-amthal, 2869

¹⁶Abshiru! Bashshiru! Inna mithla ummati mithla 'l-ghaithi. La yudra akhiruhu khayrun am awwaluhu. Aw ka-hadiqatin at'ama minha fawjun 'aman. Wa fawjun 'aman. La`alla akhiruhu qfwajan. Yakunu a`raduhum `ardan. Wa `umukum `umqan. Wa ahsanuhum hasanat (Narrates the grandfather of Ja'fr ibn Muhammad)

¹⁷Sayakunu fi akhiri hadhihi 'l-ummati qawmun lahum ajrun mithla ajri awwalihim Baihaqi narrates in Dala'il al-Nubuwa

being brought back to [our former bodies,] the way we were? 11. What! Even when we are now decayed bones? 12. Then they will say: Then this will be a return that will be a great loss to us. 13. Anyway, it will be only a single blast [of the trumpet] 14. and as a result, all on a sudden they will appear on the plain [of the mustering for the final judgment].

Moses

15. Has the story of Moses reached you? 16. [It indeed has, so remember] when his lord called him to the supremely sacred valley of Tuwa 17. and instructed him: Go to the Pharaoh. Indeed he has crossed the limits. 18. Tell him: *Do you [want to] purify yourself?* 19. *[If so] I [Moses] will guide you to your lord and as a result, you will be in awe of him*¹⁸ 20. [So Moses did go to the Pharaoh and] showed him the great sign [that was all the miraculous powers that God gave Moses] 21. but [the Pharaoh] still rejected the truth [personally] and disobeyed. 22. Even that, he made a [concerted] effort to reject [faith in God] 23. [as] he mustered everyone and made a proclamation 24. claiming: *I am your supreme lord.* 25. As a result, God took him on and [made him into] an example for both this and future times. 26. Look! In this there is a lesson for him who is in awe of God [and is understanding].

Section 2

God is Competent Enough to Resurrect

27. Which is harder to create, you or [the earth and] the sky? After all, it is he who built the sky. 28. He raised its canopy and shaped it 29. He made its nights dark and brought out the day from [that night]. 30. Next, he spread the earth. 31. and brought forth water and pasture from it 32. He firmly set down the mountains as anchors. 33. He made these all so that you and your livestock may enjoy. [And if he can create all that, why can he not re-create humans on the day of judgment?]

The Judgment

34. Therefore when the overwhelming crisis comes, 35. that day, humans will reflect on what they worked for [on earth]. 36. and the Gehenna will be revealed before all 37. So whoever crosses [the boundary set up by the sharia] 38. and revolves around the earthly life, 39. the Gehenna will become his home. 40. On the other hand, whoever truly fears standing before his lord and is used to forbidding his soul from debasing itself,¹⁹ 41.

¹⁸For the Pharoah, all that he have needed to purify himself was to recite 'there is no god but God, *la ilaha illa 'lLah*' (Ibn Kathir). If he did recite that with full faith in the prophethood of Moses, he would have received a torrent of effusion and blessings (*faydh, baraka*) that would have cleansed his inner realm and would have made him into a great saint of God. His purified saintly soul would be in awe of God. In the same way, when the companions came to prophet Muhammad and believed in his message, in an instant they were transformed into the greatest saints. In the present times, we should now go to 'real' sufi shaykhs to learn how to purify ourselves. They have ordinations (*ijazah*) from the prophet, through their lineages, as his deputies empowered to purify the inner realms of the believers.

¹⁹It is the *hawa* i.e. appetites of the *nafs* that brings the worshippers of *nafs* to ultimate ruin. Please read the section on the soul or *nafs*

verily, paradise will be his refuge.

The Mocking Unbelievers

42.[My beloved prophet!] The unbelievers irritate you by asking mockingly: *When will the 'hour' [i.e. the day of judgment] come to pass?* 43. What do you have to do with its answer? 44. It is your lord who has its best answer. 45. You are to preach only to him who feel awe and respect [for that day of judgment]. 46. When they will see that day [of judgment finally happening], they will think that they were [on the earth] for only an evening or a morning [when compared to that eternal life; then they will exclaim in grief: *My God! Why did we not prefer the eternal over the earthly?*]

Soul or *nafs*

What is the *nafs*? In verses 1-5, what the angels take away at death is the soul or *nafs*. And *nafs* is a subtle body (*jism*) as the physical body is a gross body, and it permeates the physical body made of the four elements. On the other hand, the spirit and the heart and the rest are subtle centers of the world of command, they are substratum (*zawahir*) devoid of contingentness that is related to the spiritual realm. Since these subtle elements are above the material world, they are superior to the *nafs*. They are also hard to perceive, if not totally impossible to perceive. Their existence comes to sight only when one who has mystic vision focuses his gaze (*nazar al-kashif*) onto the [world that is beyond space or time or *lamakani, lazamani*] imaginal world above the throne of God.

Nafs leads one to hell

It is the *nafs* that leads one to hell. Verses 37, 38 and 39 say: 37. *So whoever crosses [the boundary set up by the sharia]* 38. *and revolves around the earthly life,* 39. *the Gehenna will become his home.* While the *nafs* goads us towards earthly pleasures, God and his prophets asks us to focus on the pleasure and pain of the last world. The prophet said, *This world and the last world are like two co-wives. Indeed, if one of the two is well-pleased then the other one is displeased*²⁰. The Prophet said, *The lover of this world casts the last world away and the lover of the last world casts this world away. So focus on that what abides over that what is annihilated*²¹. The prophet also said, *Hell is covered by the desires of the lower soul and the paradise is covered by what the lower soul detests.*²² He also said, *Surely, cursed is the temporal world and cursed is all that is therein except the zikr of Allah, and other similar [acts of worship] and the knower and the seeker of knowledge*²³.

Nafs is evil

The soul or *nafs* is evil. In verses 40-41, God promises paradise for him who forbids his *nafs* from debasing itself. It should be borne in mind that it is the *nafs* that instigates us towards forbidden things and both reason and religion establishes that it is abominable to obey it. And this *nafs* is the worst thing that God created. Reason says that good comes from following the prophets who came with the commandments from God, and that one must follow the prophets instead of the *nafs*. Religion also says

²⁰*ma al-dunya wa 'l-akhirat illa 'l-darratan. In radiyat ahadhuma, sakhitat al-akhira* (hadith quoted by the Mujaddid in the *Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, vol. I, maktub 234. p. 32, l.5

²¹*Man uhib dunyata adar akhirata wa man uhib akhirata adar dunyata. Fa-atharu ma yabqi `ala ma yafni* (Abu Musa al-`Ash`ari narrates in Ahmad, Baihaqi's *Shu`ab al-Iman*)

²²*Hajabatin naru bi-'l-shahwati wa hajabati 'l-jannatu bi-'l-makarihi* (Abu Huraira narrates in Bukhari, Muslim) (TM)

²³*Inna al-dunya mal`wunata wa mal`wuna ma fiha illa dhikrullah wa ma walahu wa `alima aw muta`allim* (Abu Huraira narrates in Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah) (TM)

the same as God stated, *I have created man and jinn to worship me*²⁴. Jawhari wrote in his dictionary *Sihah*²⁵ that humility and worship grows into slavehood to God ('ubudiya). As exalted God said, *All that is in the heavens or the earth prostrates before Allah, be it willingly or unwillingly*²⁶ And the prophet said, *The third thing that ruins is the appetite (hawa) [of the nafs].* He continued, *And he who follows his nafs is the very worst*²⁷. He also said, *Three things are ruinous. They are: the appetites (hawa) [of the nafs], extreme misery, and pride, although the last one is the very worst*²⁸.

To kill the nafs: Right beliefs and actions

Right beliefs and actions comprise the first step in killing the nafs. In order to declare freedom from the clutch of the *nafs*, at first, one must believe in the clear rulings from the Quran and the hadith literature, and the consensus of opinions of the sages. Such believers are members of the mainstream Sunni congregation. Then secondly, whenever an evil thought comes to one's mind, one should remember the judgment, reward and punishment of the last world and avoid that evil deed. And to realize perfection on this level, one should discard even the suspicious things, for the sake of caution.

Hypocritical acts of worship

The Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi said that our leader, our qibla, the great shaykh Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband said, referring to the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi sufi tariqa, *I have found such a tariqa i.e. method that will take me to God, and that [method] is opposing the nafs, even when it is the excessive observance of the rituals of the sharia (ziyadati 'l-ri`ayati 'l-shar`iyati) [as it might give rise to hypocrisy and false pride].*

Hypocritical performance of acts of worship is a grievous sin although this sin wears the apparel of good deeds. These include worshiping to show off before others, feeling pride for the performance of acts of worship, doing excessive supererogatory pious deeds to satiate the *nafs* etc. These lead one astray, although it camouflages itself as pious acts. Once a sufi shaykh told his disciples, *Listen! I am not afraid that satan will misguide you to go on the path of sin. What I am afraid that he might reach you through the path of good deeds. So always suspect your nafs, cry and seek forgiveness.* As a poet composed,

Fight the *nafs* and the satan as enemies

even if they counsel you towards good

And obey neither, neither when they oppose nor when they agree

since you see through the machinations, both when they oppose and when they agree

Seek forgiveness from God when you only preach but do not do yourself

indeed, then you are related to a relationship that does not benefit you

*khalifi 'l-nafsa wa 'l-shaytana wa`sihima
wa in huma mahdaka 'l-nusha fa'tihimi
wa la tuti` minhuma khasman wa la hukman
fa-anta ta`rifu kaida 'l-khasmi wa 'l-hukmi
istaghfirillaha min qawlin bila `amalin
laqad nasabat bihi naslan lidhi `aqamin*

²⁴Wa ma khalaqtu 'l-jinna wa 'l-insana illa li-ya`budun (Koran 51:56)

²⁵Sihah, Jawhari (TM)

²⁶Wa li-'Llahi yasjudu man fi 'l-samawati wa 'l-ardi taw`an wa karhan (Koran 13:15)

²⁷Tirmidhi and Baihaqi narrates from Asma binti `Amis (TM)

²⁸Baihaqi narrates from Abu Huraira (TM)

To remain absolutely safe on this station, one should follow the instructions from such a shaykh who has annihilated himself in God and abides in God [i.e. who has realized *fanafillah* and *baqabillah*,] and then one does nothing without his command and permission. Shaykh Imam Ya`qub Charkhi recollected an incident from his early life, *I used to be a carpenter. My nafs grew lazy. My heart turned dark. I thought that I shall fast for a few days to remove this laziness of the nafs and the darkness of the heart and so I started. While fasting, I went to visit my shaykh, the great Imam Bahauddin Naqshband. He offered me food and told me, “Eat! He is ugly who slavishly obeys the appetites [of his nafs.] It is his nafs that takes him astray. Listen! It is better to eat than to fast when instigated by the appetites of the nafs”. So I came to the realization that in order to do supererogatory acts of worship, I must receive the permission from a sufi shaykh who is annihilated in God (shaykhi 'l-fani fillahi) and free from the clutch of the appetites [of his nafs]. I asked the shaykh, “What should someone do if he cannot find such a sufi shaykh?” The shaykh answered, “Then he should seek forgiveness from God abundantly. After each salat, he should seek forgiveness at least twenty times”. As the prophet said, “Indeed, my heart darkens and so I seek forgiveness from God everyday many times*²⁹

Sufism can kill the nafs

The second step in killing the nafs is to follow the sufi path, since sufism is the “technology” to kill the nafs. The highest level is to destroy the appetites. In order to take out the appetites completely from the nafs, all its appetites (*hawa'*) should be pulled out completely in such a way so that no desire or objective for anything but God remains. In order to realize this great honor, the sufis incessantly do the zikr, *la ilaha illa 'llah* in this meaning that none abides but God.

The Mujaddid stated, *As long as man is subservient to the appetites of his nafs, he is the slave of his nafs and follower of the satan. To realize the magnanimous felicity that is the total destruction of the appetites (salbu 'l-hawa'), it is imperative to realize pure friendship (walayat-i khalisa) of God and attain complete annihilation and abidingness (fana', baqa').* However, few may realize such an exalted treasure.

Hazrat Qadhi Sanaullah explains,

On this level, the sufi may realize the good-pleasure (rida) in whatever God has destined for him even when that destiny conflicts with his innate nature. Those who are truly realized [the station of] slavehood to God, they truly like their fate once they reach the station of friendship. Even when the fate is painful, they happily surrender to their destiny.

When they are in misery, they do supplicate for it to go away but they do it only because God asked people to supplicate or his breast does not constrict because what he wanted has not been attained. He spontaneously accepts the suzerainty of God. Now everyone is slave of God whether he chooses or not, here he happily chooses to serve God.

Then the satan finds no way to influence him, except a little. Because in most cases, it is via the appetites that he finds a way to man. Do you not perceive that he who has a fiery temper, the satan presents murder and oppression as good deeds. Similarly, he who has a cool constitution and soft heart, satan entices him to flee struggle. satan also encourages him to leave the party of truth and instead embrace hypocrisy.

As a result, it is only when the appetites will be removed from the nafs, then satan will be completely repulsed. As God said, Surely, none has suzerainty over my [believing] slaves. And your lord is

²⁹ *Innahu layuganu `ala qalbi wa inni la'astagfiru 'llaha kulla yawmin mi'ata marratin* Muslim, Kitab: al-dhikr wa 'l-du'a wa 'l-tawba, Chapter: Istihbab al-istigfar wa 'l-istikhar (2702)

sufficient as the disposer of your affairs.³⁰

The great Naqshbandi sufi shaykh Ya`qub Charkhi said on this station, *No man grows into a true man [i.e. a true believer], until he frees himself from the appetites [of his nafs]³¹*. The prophet said, *None of you will believe until you make your appetites subservient to [the sharia] that I brought³²*

80. He Frowned (`Abasa)

BACKGROUND: This sura was reveled when a companion³³ came and interrupted the prophet when he was talking to a group of pagan leaders in Mecca.

Do not stop zikr

1. He [Muhammad] frowned and turned his face away 2. as a [devoted] blind man came to [see Muhammad and interrupted him talking to a group of pagan leaders]. 3. Well! You may not have known [prophet,] but [by being in your magnetic presence] he could have purified himself.³⁴ 4. or [that presence] could cause him to chant zikr [in his inner realm]. And as a result, that [silent never-ending continuous] zikr could definitely benefit him³⁵. 5. Instead, it is the self-satisfied [pagan] 6. to whom you paid attention 7. when you have no responsibility [to him] unless he purifies himself [by forming a channel to the prophet by taking bayat and receiving effusion from him]. 8. In contrast, he who ran towards you 9. and who feels blissful awe of God 10. you ignored him.

Let All Chant zikr

11. [Prophet! My love!] Do not do that again! [The Quran] is advice [that teaches us to chant zikr]. 12. So whoever wants may chant zikr. 13. [That advice to chant zikr] is in these sacred pages 14. exalted and purified 15. written down by scribes 16. who are noble and pious.

Rebelling humans

17. Cursed be [the rebelling] humans! How ungrateful are they? 18. [Do the unbelievers ever consider] from the [insignificant] thing from which God created them? 19. He created them from a [mere] drop of sperm and then he made them develop 20. then he made the path [that is the transient worldly life] easy for them [to traverse] 21. then he causes them to die and be buried 22. then when he desires he brings them back to life

³⁰ *Inna `ibadi laysa laka `alaikhim sultanu. Wa kafa bi-rabbika wakila* (Quran 17:65)

³¹ *Inna `l-rajula la yablughu mablagha `l-rijali hatta yukhlasa mina `l-hawa'* (TM)

³² *La yu`minu ahadukum hatta yakuna hawahu taba`an lima ji`tu bihi*, quoted in Bagbi, *Sharh al-Sunna*, and Nawawi, *Al-radhin* (TM)

³³ Ibn Umm Maktum.

³⁴ O my beloved prophet! Had you gave him a face-turning i.e. project your energy on him, his inner realm would be purified. He would become free from the servile worship of his lower soul, from the slightest blemish of the worship of false gods, from the weakest evil effect from the elements of the bodily realm, and from even from the finest lack of attention of the subtle centers heart, spirit, secret, arcanum, superarcanum (*qalb, ruh, sirr, khafi, akhfa*). And we may realize this priceless treasure only if we realize your nearness and your complete face-turning and via your light of the perfections of prophethood.

³⁵ i.e. he would have been immersed in the zikr of God by which he would receive tremendous benefit. His heart would feel the presence permanently.

[and then takes them to their ultimate destination that is the hell.] 23. No! Never! [Believers are not peers to the unbelievers since] whatever God has commanded the [unbelievers to do], they have not done it its entirety.

Food-cycle

24. Now let man meditate on his food-cycle: 25. First, I send down rain in torrents, 26. then I crack open the earth well, 27. and then I grow on it grain, God's gifts 28. grapes, vegetables, 29. olives, dates, 30. thick orchards with many trees 31. fruits and [grasslands for] green fodder 32. for your enjoyment and your animal's.

Day of Judgment

33. When the deafening shriek [from the trumpet] will come [on the day of judgment,] 34. human beings will run away from their brothers [and sisters] 35. from their mothers, from their fathers 36. from their spouses and their children 37. That day everyone will be totally occupied in their own matters. 38. On that day, there will be many faces that will be bright as the morning light 39. and smiling, rejoicing at the good news [of paradise]. 40. On the other hand, there will be many faces that will be covered by dust 41. overcast with gloom [on hearing the news of hell]. 42. They are the ones who reject the truth; they are the ones who are criminals.

81. the Winding Up (Takwir)

The Signs of the Day of Destruction

1. As the sun loses its light 2. and as the stars fall down [like raindrops] 3. and as the mountains are [crushed into] dust that fly away 4. and as the full-term she-camels are left untended 5. and as the wild beasts are gathered together 6. and as the sea is filled [with fire] 7. and as the souls are again put into [the bodies] 8. and as the female infant buried alive is asked 9. for what crime was she killed 10. and as the pages [from the records of deeds] are laid open 11. and as the sky is stripped away [of its covering] 12. and as the Gehenna is turned up to full intensity 13. and as the paradise is brought near [the pious who will live therein] 14. then everyone will realize what [good or bad deeds] he has brought [before God for judgment].

Prophet Muhammad is Trustworthy

15. I swear by the planets 16. that recede and disappear [below the horizon] 17. and by the night as it fades away 18. and by the dawn as it breaks open, 19. definitely, [the Quran] has been relayed by a generous messenger 20. who is powerful. He is also close to God, possessor of the secure throne. 21. He [prophet Muhammad] is obeyed there [in the heavens by the angels], and he is trustworthy³⁶ 22. not insane [as the Meccan

³⁶All the angels obey Gabriel, In turn, Gabriel obeys the blessed prophet Muhammad. Our blessed master the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi wrote, *The Muhammadan reality is the effusion from the existence of God (ta`ayyun-i awwali*

idolaters calumniate]. 23. For sure, he [prophet Muhammad] saw [God, with his own physical eyes,] on the highest horizon [on the pinnacle of the creation, before the throne of God, in his heavenly ascension]³⁷ 24. He does not withhold [any part of the knowledge of] the unseen [that God gives him] 25. It is surely not the word of satan, cast down [from above]. 26. So where are you [the unbelievers] going! [Why do you not see that Muhammad is a true prophet?]

God Guides Them Whom He Chooses

27. [The Quran] is only a preaching to the world. 28. but it is only for those among you who desires to follow the straight path. 29. However, you will not [even] desire [to follow that straight path] unless God, the lord of the worlds, also desires so [and guides you].

82. Tearing Apart (Infitar)

The Day of Judgment

1. When the sky will be torn apart 2. and even the bright stars will be scattered 3. and the seas will rip open [tsunami-style] 4. and the [bodies] will be pulled out of the graves 5. then every person will realize what he has done, good or bad.

God Nourishes Humans

6. O humankind! What has confused you about your generous lord? 7. It is he who created you, shaped you and put you in the right proportion. 8. He formed each of you in a unique form, as he willed.

The Justice of the Judgment

9. No! Never! [O you who reject God. You are wrong.] You even deny the last judgment. 10. [But indeed the judgment is true, and] indeed, you are observed 11. by the honored angels who record 12. knowing whatever you do. 13. Indeed, the good will enjoy the comforts [of paradise] 14. and the evil will go to Gehenna. 15. Each will enter, with justice, on the judgment day 16. that they will not be able to leave 17. What do you know about the judgment day? 18. Let me repeat, what do you know about the judgment day? 19. On that day, no one will be able to do anything for someone else. All ability will belong to God exclusively.

bi-fayd al-wujud wa maratib al-qurb). It is nearer to God than everything else. It is the origin of all creation.

(*Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani*, Vol III, maktub 122) Also this hadith: *In the heavens, I have two ministers, Gabriel and Michael. And in the world, I have two ministers, Abubakr and Umar. (Ama wizirayi fi 'l-sama'i fa-jibra'il wa mika'il wa wizar'a'i fi 'l-ardi abubakr wa 'umar)* [Tirmidhi, *Kitab al-Manaqib*, 3619] (TM)

³⁷ 'the highest horizon' (*ufuqi 'l-mubin*) denotes the supreme station on the path for the seekers of God, the loftiest level in the reality of slavehood and the purest display of love that is the Muhammadan reality. This is the station of non-entification (*la-ta`ayyun*). One cannot even conceive of wayfaring on this level. The Mujaddid spoke thus.

83. Those Who Give Less in Measure (Mutaffifin)

The Cheaters Will Face God

1. Sufferings await those who give less in measure 2. When they measure from the people, they take in full measure 3. but when they measure out to others, they give less. 4. Do they have the slightest idea that they will live again? 5. [It will happen] on that great day 6. the day when humankind will rise before the lord of the worlds.

The Impious

7. No! Never! Indeed the records of the sinners are in the `vault'. 8. Do you know what the vault is? 9. It is [the repository in hell for] the deeds [of the sinners]. 10. That day, they who reject the truth will have to suffer the torture of the howling hell. 11. They are those who deny the day of judgment 12. and they are the sinners --- it is only the sinners who deny the day of judgment and every sinner denies it. 13. When my verses are recited to them, they claim that these are folk tales. 14. It is not true. It is their [evil] deeds that have corroded their hearts [and so they disbelieve]³⁸.

The Day of Judgment: the Pious and the Sinners

15. Surely on that day, a veil will separate [the sinners] from their lord,³⁹ [while the pious will surely see him.] 16. Then they [the sinners] will enter Gehenna. 17. Then they will be told, *This is [the hell] that you used to deny.* 18. [On the other hand,] the records of the pious will be in [the repository in paradise called] the `summit'. 19. What will teach you the summit? 20. It is [the repository for] the pristine records [of the pious]. 21. Those who have realized nearness to God will testify to it. 22. Indeed, the pious will definitely be immersed in bliss 23. [reclining] on well-cushioned exquisite thrones, enjoying [the bliss of seeing God]. 24. You will see the radiance and bliss on their faces. 25. They will be given pure wine to drink that none has touched before 26. whose last sip will be fragrant like musk. Let humankind strive to realize this [bliss]. 27. [That wine] will be blended with [the elixir from] *tasnim* 28. which is a spring [in paradise] from which only the near ones to God may drink.

Tables Turned

29. [While in this world] indeed, the wrong-doers used to mock the believers. 30. and when they passed by them, they winked at each other. 31. Later when they returned to their own people, they ridiculed [the believers to their friends]. 32. And when they saw

³⁸The prophet said, *As a believer sins, a black spot stains his heart. As he repents, that stain is removed. As he sins again and again, his entire heart is blackened.* (Baggi, Nasa`i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Habban, Hakim, Tirmidhi narrates from Abu Huraira) (TM)

³⁹When in the last world, the believers will enjoy the incredibly-pleasure-giving beatific vision of God, the unbelievers will remain deprived of that pleasure. Hasan Basri said, *If the lovers of God were told that they would not see the beatific vision of God, they will die in grief.* Imam Malik and Imam Shafi`i both agreed that this verse implies that the believers will see God in the last world.

those [who believed], they said: *Indeed they surely have gone astray*. 33. but they [the infidels] have not been sent to judge them. 34. So today the believers will rejoice 35. [reclining] on well-cushioned exquisite thrones, observing [blissfully their lord's glory]. 36. Great pain awaits the ignorant. Have the disbelievers been paid for what their past misdeeds?

84. the Cracking Open (Inshiqaq)

The Day of Destruction

1. When [the day of destruction will come] the sky will crack open 2. by the command of its creator that it is bound to obey 3. and the surface of the earth will be flattened out 4. and it will disgorge all [the dead bodies] that was inside it, turning itself empty 5. by the command of its creator which it is bound to obey.

Strive for God

6. O humankind! Make a single-minded effort towards [realizing] your lord as long as you live. As its prize you will encounter [the blissful face of your beloved lord in paradise].

The Judgment

7. [On the judgment day,] he whose record will be given on the right hand 8. his accounts will be taken leniently 9. and he will return to his loved ones cheerfully. 10. Conversely, he whose record will be given behind his back 11. he would wish that he were destroyed 12. for he will enter the burning blaze [of hell]. 13. Yes! He was enjoying his life with his loved ones [while on the earth]. 14. He was sure that he would never return [to God for judgment] 15. while in fact his lord was watching him [having loosened his reins, to discover God].

The Prophet Will Ascend

16. I swear by the white glow after the sunset 17. and by the night and by what it enshrouds 18. and by the moon when it becomes full 19. that you [Muhammad] will definitely ascend from stage to stage [to the ultimate nearness to God].

And the Unbelievers Will Go Down

20. So what happened to them [the unbelievers] that they do not believe? 21. When the Quran is recited to them, they do not listen with humility --- [how is it possible?] 22. On the contrary, the unbelievers reject it. 23. God knows [the hatred and fear towards the truth] that they keep within themselves. 24. Therefore, give them the dreadful news of a painful punishment 25. except those who believe and do good deeds --- for them is a prize that will never end.

85. Heavenly House of Worship (Buruj)

The Persecutors Were Destroyed

1. I swear by the heavens that bear the heavenly house of worship⁴⁰ 2. by the promised day [of resurrection] 3. by the witness and what he witnesses. 4. [Actually,] it was the pit people who were destroyed 5. by the fire with blazing flames 6. while they were sitting around it, 7. and observing what they were doing to the believers [and perversely enjoying it] .

Because they Persecuted the Believers

8. The [pit people] resented the [believers] for no other reason but they believed in God the almighty, praiseworthy 9. who is the sovereign over the heavens and the earth --- and God witnesses everything.

Persecutors Punished

10. Those who persecute believing men and women and then fail to repent, for them is the torture of hellfire that is dire pain 11. and on the other hand, those who believe and do good deeds, for them is paradise wherein rivers flow --- this is a great triumph. 12. Yes, your lord's assault is terrible 13. Certainly, it is he who originates and brings again 14. and he is the all-forgiving, all-loving 15. possessing the all-glorious throne.

God is All-powerful

16. He does whatever he desires 17. Have you come to know the news of the armies 18. of the Pharaoh and the Thamud people? 19. Still the unbelievers are rejecting the truth 20. but God is encompassing them [with his power, although they do not realize it]. 21. Indeed, this is the Quran full of wisdom 22. that is on the secured tablet.

86. Meteor (Tariq)

The Oath

1. I swear by the sky and the meteor 2. Do you realize what the meteor is? 3. It is a thing that pierces [the sky]. 4. Everything has a guardian over it.

God Can Resurrect

5. So let man reflect on the origin of his creation. 6. He is created from the [seminal] fluid that flows quickly, 7. [originally] coming out from [the whole body i.e.] between

⁴⁰It may allude to the 'heavenly house of worship' (baitu 'l-ma`mur) that is the Kaaba of the heavens. As the prophet said explaining his heavenly ascension (*mi`raj*), *Then I was raised to the 'heavenly house of worship,' which is in the seventh sky right above the Kaaba. (Thumma rafa`a ila 'l-baitu 'l-ma`mur ya`ni fi 'l-sama'i 'l-sabi`ata bi-jadha' 'l-ka`ba')* (Bukhari, Muslim narrates in the hadith on *mi`raj*). (TM)

the back and the breast-bones.⁴¹ 8. Yes, he [God] has the power to resurrect him [man]. 9. The day [of resurrection] is the day when the unknown things [i.e. beliefs, sayings and deeds of man] will be examined 10. and he will have no power nor anyone to help him [to gain paradise or to avoid hell].

The Quran Differentiates

11. I swear by the sky that contains the rain 12. and by the earth that cracks open 13. Yes, [the Quran is the criterion that] differentiates [between truth and falsehood] 14. This is not a joke! 15. Yes, they plot plots 16. and I give them respite. 17. [My beloved prophet!] So give the unbelievers respite for some time.

87. Most High (A'la)

Do zikr

1. [Prophet! Chant zikr and] glorify the name of your lord the most high. 2. It is he who creates and gives shape 3. and who causes to grow in a measured cadence, and shows them the path [towards good] 4. and who grows green grass 5. and who finally makes it into gray dry grass.

Quran Is Guidance

6. I will make you recite it [the Quran] so that you will not forget [it, instead you will transmit it accurately] 7. except what God wills. Yes, he knows what is clearly-seen and what is hidden. 8. I shall make the easy path easy for you. 9. So teach them the zikr if the zikr will benefit them. 10. He will do the zikr who is humble 11. but the wretched will leave it aside 12. --- instead he will enter the great fire. 13. where he will neither die nor live [enjoyably].

Those Who Do zikr Will Be Saved

14. Yes, he will succeed who purifies himself [via the sufi method] 15. by chanting zikr on the name of his lord [first] and then offers salat [with a purified heart].⁴²

The Coming World Is More Important

16. Yet you preoccupied the life of this world 17. although the coming world is better for you than the one you are in now 18. Yes, this is in the scrolls that came before 19. in the

⁴¹Between the back and the breast-bones means the entire body, according to Baidawi

⁴²First, the believer should purify his heart, its only then that his salat and other worships would be accepted. In the prophets time, if a believer remained in the company of the prophet for even a moment, his inner realm would have been purified to the highest degree. That is why it is the consensus of opinion among the Sunni scholars that the companions are the best of all Muslims. The system that evolved after that is that a believer must form a spiritual bondage (i.e. take *bayat*) with a companion who is a deputy of the prophet (i.e. a true sufi shaykh) and learn from him. And after the era of the companions, the bayat should be taken to a follower (*tabi'i*) and onwards. A sufi shaykh is such a deputy of the prophet who has received his mandate to teach (*ijazah*) from the prophet through a lineage or *silsila*. Just like the hadith teachers have also their mandate to teach from the prophet through a *silsila* of teachers. [IA]

scrolls of Abraham and Moses.

88. Great Calamity (Gashiyah)

People of Hell

1. Has the news of the great calamity reached you? 2. [On that day,] their faces who rejected the truth --- who will be many in number --- will be downcast [in fear] 3. and those faces will look toiling and tired 4. They will enter a burning hell 5. where they will be made to drink from a fountain of white-hot [molten metal]. 6. and they will have nothing to eat but cactus thorns 7. that will neither nourish them nor satiate their hunger.

People of Paradise

8. For many, their faces will beam with bliss 9. well-pleased at the result of their [earthly] deeds 10. They shall be in the lofty gardens of paradise. 11. where they will not hear any bad word 12. There will be flowing springs, 13. and thrones raised high, 14. and cups put in place [on the banks of the springs], 15. and cushions lined up, 16. and carpets spread out.

God is Capable of Creating Paradise

17. Do they not look at the rain clouds, how they are formed? 18. and at the sky, how it is raised? 19. and at the mountains, how it is anchored? 20. and at the surface of the earth, how it is spread?

Prophet's Mission is Only to Preach

21. So preach to them, for you are only a preacher. 22. You have no control over them 23. except that whoever turns his face away and disbelieves, God will torture him severely 24. [In the end,] they will come back to me [God] 25. and it will be me [God] to whom they will show the accounts [of their deeds].

89. Dawn (Fajr)

The Oath

1. I swear by the dawn 2. and by the exalted ten nights 3. and by the even and the odd 4. by the night as it passes 5. Is there a solemn oath in this for the wise?

The Corrupt are Punished

6. You have seen how your lord punished the Aad people. 7. and the Iram people who erected skyscrapers 8. likes of which were not built anywhere else; 9. and the Thamud people who carved out [buildings] from the rocks in the valley 10. and the Pharaoh who owned well-built palaces 11. --- he transgressed in the land 12. and increased the corruption there 13. As a result, your lord punished them severely. 14. Yes, your lord is

on a watch-tower [watching all].

Humiliation is Due to Sin

15. [Common] man is such that when his lord favors him generously as a test, he says: *My lord has honored me.* 16. Conversely, when he gives him less as a test, he cries out: *My lord has humiliated me [undeservedly].* 17. No! Never! [Let me, God, answer that this humiliation is due to your sins, as] you refuse to be charitable to the orphan. 18. and you do not encourage feeding the poor 19. and you eat up the inheritance [of the weak] devouring it altogether. 20. and you love wealth with a boundless love [i.e. more than your love for God and his commandments].

The Common Faithful Will Be Judged

21. No! Never! It is not right. When, then the earth will be pulverized into powder with pounding after pounding 22. and your lord and the angels will come arranged in row after row --- 23. on that day hell will be brought; on that day people will chant the zikr but will that zikr benefit them? 24. He will exclaim, *How I wish I sent forward [more good deeds as a provision] for this life here [in the coming world].* 25. That day, God will torment the sinners most severely 26. and they will be tied to their punishment most strongly.

Souls in Inner Peace Will Enter Paradise Directly

27. O you, the soul in inner peace⁴³! 28. Return to your lord now that you are well-pleased towards God yourself and well-pleasing to God as well⁴⁴; 29. enter the congregation of my elect devotees 30. and [as a result] enter my paradise [directly, without going through any judgment]⁴⁵.

90. City (Balad)

Purpose of Life

1.No! I swear by this city [of Mecca] 2. and you [Muhammad] live in this city 3. I swear by the father and whom he fathers 4. Yes, I have created man [to battle through] the problems [of life].

⁴³Soul in inner peace is a soul that realizes inner peace and pleasure in the zikr and service of God as fish finds peace in water. And the soul becomes peaceful when it loses all attraction towards the ugly and the profane. When the attributes of God are reflected on him, only then he may become free from evil suggestions. At that time, his own individuality fades away in that self-disclosure of the divine attributes. This is called annihilation (*fana'*). When this state becomes permanent, it is called abidingness (*baqa'*). Now annihilation and abidingness happens to the heart first before the soul. Only the permanent, never-ending, internal zikr of God can bring one to those states. When the soul realizes inner peace (*mutma'inna*), it attains true faith (*iman*).

⁴⁴O soul in inner peace (*nafs al-mutma'inna*)! You have realized good-pleasure towards your lord in this earth already. Now return to the state of bliss that your lord has prepared for you. Be satisfied with what God has prepared for you. Know that he is well-pleased towards you. Enter the congregation of God's elect devotees and enter paradise.

⁴⁵Some sufi masters may interpret these four verses as: O soul absorbed in the pleasures of this world! Tear the last string that binds you to this temporal world. Focus on God whole-heartedly. Take up their path i.e. sufi tariqa who are on a never-ending journey towards God the eternal beauty.

Man's Arrogance Despite the Blessings

5. Does he think that none will ever be able to put him in his place? 6. He says, *I have spent a lot of wealth.* 7. Does he think that no one can read his mind? 8. [Recount my mercies for him:] Have I not made two eyes for him, 9. or a tongue or two lips? 10. Haven't I pointed him towards the two clearly-marked ways [of good and evil]? 11. Still he did not bear the travail of treading the steep mountain pass.

The Formula For Success

12. Do you understand what is the steep mountain pass? 13. It is to repent from sins and then to keep your soul pure from any more sins. 14. and to give food in famine 15. to the orphan who is related 16. or to the poor in misery. 17. Additionally, he enrolls in the community of believers whose members advise each other towards patience and compassion 18. They are the fortunate 19. and those who disbelieve my words, they are the failures 20. who will be locked away in hell.

91. Sun (Shams)

Purified Souls Are Successful

1.I swear by the sun and its resplendence [at noon] 2. and by the moon when it is luminous [at the full moon] 3. and by the day when it displays [the sun's brilliance] 4. and by the night as it enshrouds, 5. by the sky and its builder 6. by the earth and he who spreads it 7. and by humans and by he who shaped them 8. and then gave them the knowledge to distinguish between good and evil, 9. [by all these oaths, you may know that definitely that] he succeeds who purifies [his inner realm by learning the knowledge of the heart i.e. the sufi sciences]⁴⁶ 10. and he fails who corrupts [his inner realm by refusing to learn sufism.]

The Thamud People

BACKGROUND: Prophet Salih was sent to the Thamud, a people in the Arabian peninsula, who rejected him as a prophet and instead challenged him, *If you are indeed a prophet, show us a miracle, bring forth a camel out of a rock, and then we will believe.* By the power of God, the prophet did indeed bring forth a gargantuan camel out of a rock. That camel used to drink up all the water from their well and so their livestock had none left. So the prophet ruled that the camel would drink one day and the people and their livestock would drink the other day. Growing impatient even at that, they killed the camel of God and as a result brought forth perdition upon themselves.

⁴⁶He succeeds who purifies his soul, makes it wholesome and adorns it with fealty towards God --- here God is referring to those people who desire God whole-heartedly . And God elects whomever he chooses, and he guides towards him all who comes towards him. Hasan Basri. (TM) And the science of purifying the soul and heart is the knowledge of the heart as in the hadith that Abu Huraira narrated, *Knowledge are of two types, knowledge of the tongue and knowledge of the heart.* The prophet has ordained the true sufi shaykhs to teach this knowledge through their tariqas. In the time of the prophet, the system for learning this knowledge was to believe in the prophet, and take his hands [in a bayat] and then instantaneously his soul would be purified. Now the system is to give bayat to a deputy of the prophet who has received an ordination from him through a lineage i.e. a qualified true sufi shaykh and then follow his guidance (as the companions followed the prophet) and in time his soul and heart would be purified. (IA)

11. The Thamud people rejected [prophet Salih] out of their rebelliousness. 12. The most unfortunate one among them took lead [to slaughter the camel sent by God]. 13. Yes! The prophet of God told them: *This is the she-camel of God. Let her drink [at the wells].* 14. Still, they rejected [the advice of] the prophet and instead cut her down. For their sin, their lord obliterated them, he devastated them 15. [since they had cut her down] without fearing its consequence.

92 Lail (Night)

The Two Ends: Paradise and Hell

1. I swear by the night when it enshrouds [the day] 2. and by the day when it shines brightly [dispelling the night] 3. and by God who created the male and the female 4. Yes, your [man's] efforts are [directed] to different [ends, paradise or hell].

How to Choose the Destination?

5. Therefore, he who gives away [wealth in charity or does positive pious acts] as well as prevents himself from transgressing, 6. and by [his pious practice] verifies the beautiful [kalima, *there is no god but God, la ilaha illa 'Llah*, in his life,]⁴⁷ 7. I shall facilitate for him to traverse the path of comfort [do good deeds, and enter paradise]. 8. As for him who is miserly [i.e. hesitant to obey God] or considers that he does not need [God, by showing a don't-care attitude] 9. and rejects the beautiful [kalima, *there is no god but God, la ilaha illa 'Llah*, by failing to actualize it in his life,] 10. I shall facilitate for him to traverse the hard path [towards hell by doing bad deeds]. 11. His wealth will come to no use when he will be thrown [into hell]. 12. My duty is only to point out the true path, 13. I own the coming world and the one before [i.e. the present world].

The Wretched and the Pious

14. I warn you about the blazing hell. 15. None will enter it but the wretched 16. who rejects [God] and turns away [his face from the true religion i.e. the unbelievers]. 17. Certainly, the truly pious⁴⁸ will be kept away from it. 18. [He is truly pious] who gives away his wealth to purify himself, 19. selflessly; not in the [narrow self-centered] hope that his favor would be returned. 20. [Instead the truly pious does so] only to please his exalted lord.⁴⁹ 21. Yes! He will soon be [well-rewarded and] very pleased [when he enters his next life].

⁴⁷Here the beautiful (*al-husna*) means the formula *la ilaha illa 'Llah*. According to the exegetes Abu `Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami and al-Duhak. Also `Atiyah narrates it from Ibn Abbas. (TM)

⁴⁸He who has traversed the sufi path of God-realization and has made his heart and soul peaceful

⁴⁹i.e. only with the single-minded intention to please God instead of an worldly motive. When the sufi 's heart and soul are purified, he does all worship only to please God and he reaches that state. So learning the sufi sciences is obligatory on every Muslim man and woman, up to the level that his heart is purified, as the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi stipulates. (IA)

93 Progressing Day (Duha)

BACKGROUND: It was revealed in Mecca when revelations resumed after a short hiatus. In this sura, God solaces the prophet for this interruption and also consoles him. When these two suras 93 and 94 were revealed, the prophet had just started his mission to spread Islam --- it was the start of his descent towards the creation (nuzul). So far he had been experiencing only ascent ('uruj) and so his focus had remained totally fixed on God, but now it started to turn towards the creation. He was being encumbered with the responsibility of guiding the creation. He was suffering so severely from the pain of separation from his beloved, that he often wished that he jumped down from a sharp cliff and committed suicide, as its narrated in the hadith. So these two suras were revealed to console him.

God loves the prophet

1.I swear by the day as it is progresses [to noon] 2. and by the night as it grows still 3. Neither has your lord abandoned you, [my beloved prophet], nor is he displeased [on you]⁵⁰.

God's Favors on the Prophet

4. Yes, the future is better for you than the past. 5. Soon and certainly, your lord will grant you [favors] and you will be well-pleased. 6. Finding you an orphan, did he not give you a home? 7. Finding you [completely drowned in the love of God and] confused⁵¹, did he not guide you [towards intimate closeness to God]?⁵² 8. Finding you poor [in qualities], did he not make you rich⁵³ [in qualities]?

God's Instructions for the Prophet

9.Therefore, do not abandon the orphan, 10. [and since God guided you when you were lost in love,] do not turn away the seeker [of knowledge]⁵⁴ 11. instead [preach Islam] by publicly proclaiming the bounty [of prophethood] that God has given you.

⁵⁰Muhammad my love! You are suffering from the pain of separation from me, and I am your beloved --- and it is because you are faithfully fulfilling your task of giving guidance to the creation. But bear in mind! With this pain of separation lies completion, the perfection in intimacy. Although such a descent tastes bitter, it is higher than hundreds of thousands of ascent that may taste sweet. So understand that while in the past you had been blessed with the felicity of ascent ('uruj) only, from now on you will be blessed with descent (nuzul) as well. See note on Ascent and Descent.

⁵¹Literally, *wa wajadaka dallan* means he [God] found you lost i.e. misguided, but some sufi saints have interpreted it to mean *you were completely drowned in the love of God and confused*. Here allegorically, attraction of love from God has been called misguidance (dal) because an attracted person is usually confused about the path. As a hadith report says, *Love has made them blind and deaf*.

⁵²i.e. did he not guide you to God so that you reach close to him, even *as close as the closeness to which the two limbs of a drawn bow come, or even closer (qaba qawsayni aw adna)* --- the closeness that you reached on the night of the heavenly ascension (*mi'raj*). Also, God taught the prophet knowledge about himself, as he who knows himself know his lord (*man `arafa nafsahu, faqad `arafa rabbahu*).

⁵³All the beautiful qualities e.g. grace, love, mercy etc. that the prophet possessed were gifts from God. In his essence, man possesses nothing good. As the Quran says, *Whatever beautiful that happens to you is from Allah and whatever ugly that happens to you is from yourself (nafsika)*. (*Quran 4:79*) And as the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi explained, *The contingent beings are founts for all evil and corruption and asylums for all depravity and imperfection. And all good and perfection that is natural in them is borrowed from the God which is sheer good and an effusion from him (Maktubat-i Imam-i Rabbani, volume I, maktub 234) (IA)*

⁵⁴Hasan Basri explained in this manner, relating this verse to verse 7. Also consider the hadith, *There will be a rein of fire on the mouth of the knower who hid knowledge from a seeker*. [Panipathi narrates in *Tafsir al-Mazhari* from `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud] (TM)

Poem on verse 7

Wa rawadnahu al-jibala 'l-shamma min dhahabin

`an nafsihi fa`araha aiyyuma shamami

Wa akkadat wa hadhihi fiha daruratuhu

inna 'l-darurata la ta`du `ala 'l-`asami

Ascent and Descent

On their journeys, the sufi travelers experience either ascent (*uruj*) or descent (*nuzul*). Ascent is when they are fully focused on God losing all connection to the temporal world. It could be either journey towards God (*sayr fi 'lLah*) or journey in God (*sayr fi 'lLah*). On the other hand, descent is when the sufi aspirant is focused on the creation, by the command of God. They are given the task of guiding mankind. At that time, they lose their exclusive focus of God. It could be either journey from God (*sayr 'an Allah*) or journey in the [created] things (*sayr fi 'l-ashya*).

Descent is more exalted than ascent but it is branded by the pain of separation. The sufi is then in pain. But unless this pain is felt and the sufi completes his descent, he cannot benefit the creation. An example is prophet Noah who had a high ascent but incomplete descent back to the creation. That's why few people accepted him as a prophet. A counter-example is prophet Muhammad who had been supremely successful in propagating his message as he had a complete descent. And his pain of separation from God was also sharper and stronger than any other prophet as he stated, *The degree of pain that I was made to suffer, no one has suffered in that degree (ma udhi'a ahadun mithla ma udhi'tu)*. He also had the highest ascent as well, since on the night of the heavenly ascension, he reached very close to God, closer than anyone else in the creation, *as close as the closeness to which its two limbs come when a bow is drawn (qaba qawsayni aw adna)*.

94 Heart Expansion (Inshirah, Sharh)

BANCKGROUND: The prophet said, *Gabriel came and cut my breast open and took out my heart. He washed it by holy water of the aquifer Jamjam kept in a golden vessel, and filled up the heart with faith and wisdom from another golden vessel. Then he put my heart back in the breast, closed up the incision and made it as before.*⁵⁵ Such cleaning of the heart occurred twice, while he was a boy, and on the night of heavenly ascension (*mi'raj*). Panipathi comments that what was taken out was the evil part of the heart and soul that was made from the four elements, the part that goads the soul towards sin and shamelessness.

God's Favors to the Prophet

1.[My beloved prophet!] Have I not expanded your heart for your [own good]⁵⁶? 2. Have

⁵⁵Several hadith reports in Bukhari and Muslim

⁵⁶O my beloved prophet! I have opened the door to your heart. And entering your heart through that door is ethereal light, gnosis and knowledge that could never be attained through study or intellectual exercise. Usually, humans are totally immersed in the creation. However, you are equally attentive to both me, God, and also the creation, in order to show

I not relieved you of your [burden of the sharia that was heavy as a] hill,⁵⁷ 3. which was breaking your back? 4. And I elevated your stature⁵⁸.

The Prophet Will Have Better Times

5. Therefore, certainly ease comes after difficulty. 6. Yes, ease comes after difficulty.

How the Prophet Should Express Gratefulness

7. So when you find any moment free, immerse yourself in the private worship of God [by being absorbed in silent internal zikr]⁵⁹ 8. and focus on your lord with love⁶⁰ [the way in which your true followers, the sufis, will worship God with love, after you, O prophet!].

The poem in praise of the prophet by the companion Hassan ibn Thabit may be excerpted here,

He is illuminated as the seal of prophethood
from God he will be the witnessed and he will be revealed and witness
The lord annexed the name of the prophet to his name
when one cries out in the five prayer-calls *I witness*
God brought out his name from his own, so that he can honor him
So the lord of the throne is *the praised one*, and *the praiser* is Muhammad

Agharra `alaihi bi 'l-nabuwati khatim

them the way to me. Since I have expanded your heart, you are able to realize the dual perfections of ascent and descent ('uruj, nuzul). So do not be saddened by the bad words of the idolaters. You are my most beloved, at all times.

⁵⁷Burden can be the sharia as the Quran says, *It is a burden to all except the humble.* (*Wa innaha lakabiratun illa `ala l-khashi`in*) (*Quran 2:45*) When the bad part of the prophet's heart had been taken away, his heart was filled with faith and wisdom and it was then that he felt the burden of sharia to be light, peaceful and beautiful. As he said, *Salat soothes my eyes.* (*Wa ja`ala qurrata `aini fi 'l-salah*) (*Nasa'i, Kitab: 'Ashrata 'l-Nisa', Bab: Hubbu 'l-Nisa'*, 3939) That is true faith according to the sufi masters, and it is the true meaning of the term, *I have relieved you of your burden.* When one attains that faith, sharia becomes easy to practice and the heavy burden of the sharia becomes light. The prophet realized this state both physically (when angels came and cleansed his heart) and inwardly. But the friends of God in his community realize that state inwardly only, it appears in their inner gaze imaginarily, when they annihilate ('fana') their lower souls. It is then that they are given the good news of the expansion of the heart. This is how the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi and the sufi masters of his lineage have explained it. Alternatively, the burden may be the prophet's burden of separation from his beloved God. Then it means: *You were burning in the pain of separation and I soothed that pain by re-starting my communication with you.*

⁵⁸i.e. when the angels do zikr on the name of the lord, they add also the name of the prophet. *The prophet asked Gabriel, What does it mean when God says "And I elevated your stature?" Gabriel answered that it meant that God said, "When they will do zikr [on my name], they will do zikr on you as well [i.e. on your name]* (*Idha dhukirat, dhukirat ma`i*). *(Abu Ya`la narrates in a hasan chain)* (TM)

⁵⁹i.e. prophet! When you will have any free moment, fill it up with the constant, never-ending, silent, internal zikr of God. As the prophet said, *The residents of paradise will be sorry for their moments on earth when they did not do any zikr of God.* (*Laysa yatahassara ahl al-jannata illa `ala sa`ata marrat bihim illa wa lam yadhkuru 'l-Laha fiha*) (*Tibrani, Bayhaqi narrates in Shu`abu 'l-Iman and also in a second narration*) (TM)

⁶⁰i.e. initially, you should focus on your lord's blessings and beautiful attributes and graduate to the higher stage where you would focus on his incomparable person. (TM, IA)

mina 'llahi mash-hudun yaluhu wa yash-hadu
Wa damma 'l-ilahu isma 'l-nabiyyi bi-ismihi
idha qala fi 'l-khamisi 'l-adhani ash-hadu
Fa-shaqqa lahu min ismihi liyujillahu
fa-dhu 'l-'arshi mahmudun wa hadha muhammadun

95 The Fig (Tin)

The Oath

1.I swear by the fig and the olive 2. by Mount Sinai 3. by this secure city [Mecca].

Recompense

4. Yes, I had created man from the finest elements. 5. Later I degraded him to the lowest of the low. 6. except those who believe and do good deeds, for they will be given endless rewards. 7. [O the unwise humans!] So after all these what makes you deny the recompense? 8. Is God not the wisest sage [who will grant the prophet ultimate triumph?]

96 Congealed Blood ('Alaq')

BACKGROUND: This was the very first revelation that prophet Muhammad received from God, while he was meditating in the cave Hira in the Mountain of Light. There angel Gabriel came to him with this message from God.

The First Revelation

1.[My beloved prophet!] Read in the name of your lord the creator. 2. He creates humans from congealed blood. 3. Read: Also our lord is most generous 4. He teaches humans by pen 5. teaches humans what they do not know.

He Who Forbids To Pray

6.Yes! Some humans tend to rebel. 7. whenever they see themselves as self-sufficient. 8. Still, [it is certain that ultimately] you will return to your God. 9. [My beloved prophet!] Have you seen him who forbids 10. people to pray? 11. Have you ever seen him to be on the right path, 12. or advise others to be pious? 13. [My beloved prophet!] Have you noticed that when he refuses and turns away, 14. at that time, does he not know that God sees?

God Is the Ultimate End

15. Let him beware! If he does not desist, we will drag him by the fore-lock. 16. the fore-lock of the lying sinners. 17. So let him call his associates 18. and on my part I shall call my angels who supervise the hell. 19. Take note! Ignore him! Instead prostrate towards me [God] and as a result draw closer [to me].

97 Destiny (Qadr)

1. [Quran] --- Yes, I have sent it down on the night of destiny 2. And what do you perceive about the night of destiny 3. The night of destiny is better than a thousand months 4. On it, the spirit [archangel Gabriel] and the angels come down by their lord's instruction. In everything, 5. there is peace. [That peace or the night of destiny] lasts until dawn.

98 Clear Evidence (Bayyinah)

They Rejected

1. The unbelievers among the people of the book and the idolaters --- they were unanimous in their rejection of the truth until clear evidence came to them: 2. a messenger from God [prophet Muhammad] reciting pure scrolls [the Quran] 3. in which lie the true law.

They Diverged

4. Those who were given books [that were revealed before, i.e. the Christians and the Jews] --- they diverged [into two groups: those who believed in the Muhammadan revelation and those who did not] when [the prophet] and clear evidence [the Quran] came to them. 5. They were commanded only to worship God with piety according to his pure and pristine religion [the universal Islam], establish salat and give the required charity --- this is the religion of God.

The Final Homes

6. The unbelievers of the people of the book and the idolaters shall be in hellfire for eternity --- they are the worst of creatures. 7. Yes, those who believe and do good deeds -- they are the best of creatures. 8. Their lord will reward them with gardens of paradise in which rivers flow --- they will live there forever. God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with him --- it is for him who feels blissful awe for his lord.

Good-pleasure

The bliss that is paradise and all therein is the bounty of God. The prophet said, God will address the dwellers of paradise, *O the people of paradise!* They will reply, *We are here, o our lord and master. You possess all that is good.* God will ask them, *Are you well-pleased?* They will answer, *Why will we not be well-pleased when you have given us that what you have given none of your creation*⁶¹. God will then ask, *Will I not grant you even more bounty than this?* They will reply, *Can there be more bounty than this? O Lord! Is there anything better than this?* God will reply, *Yes! It would be my good-*

⁶¹it refers to angels

pleasure. Let me give you that today. I shall never again be displeased on you⁶².

There are three levels of this good-pleasure and in his path, a God-realized sufi ascend from level to level. The first level is the complete acceptance of the decisions of God. They firmly believe that God is pure good. Whatever he does is good, regardless of whether they like it or not. They realize that nothing happens without the consent of God, even if it is disbelief or a grievous sin. People with wisdom realize that God is the absolute lord and he runs the world according to his own desire. They also realize that he is wisdom itself and all his deeds are wise decisions, and as a result they are well-pleased towards God both in pleasure and pain. Pointing to such a level of good-pleasure, the sufi saint Sarri Sakti wrote, *If you are not well-pleased towards him, how can you hope that he will be well-pleased towards you.*

The second level of good-pleasure is realized when man loves all his sustainer's desires, even if those desires contradicts what his *nafs* wants. The nature of love is such that the lover is always well-pleased towards his beloved --- whatever comes from the beloved, be it good or bad, the lover loves it. As a poet once composed, *If you are happy at my pain from being separated from, you, I am also happy.*

In the third or the supreme level of good-pleasure, when man reaches the supreme level of satisfaction, it is God who desires man's contentment. As God says to the prophet, *Soon and certainly, your lord will grant you [favors] and you will be well-pleased.* (Koran 93:5) When this verse was revealed, the prophet said, *I will not be content as long as a single follower of mine remains in hell.*

As the sufi saint the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi wrote on the reality of good-pleasure, *Only after you have wayfared through the ten stations (maqam), you may attain perfection in this [sufi] path [of God-realization] and reach the end of ends. The first station is repentance and the last station is good-pleasure (ridha). The station of good-pleasure is the highest of all the stations of perfection. Even the vision of Allah in the last world is not higher. The reality of the Station of good-pleasure (haqiqat-i maqam-i ridha) will be seen in the last world (akhirat). The reality of the other stations will not be seen in the last world. There repentance (tawba) is meaningless, abstinence (zuhd) has no room, trust in the divine (tawakkul) is redundant, patience (sabr) is unconceivable. However, gratefulness (shukr) will be found there but that will be merely a branch of good-pleasure (ridha) not separate from it.*⁶³

99 Convulsion (Zilzal, Zalzalah)

The Final Day

1. [It will be the day of destruction] when the earth will shake in its own convulsions. 2. [It will crack open] and throw out its burdens [that are the dead bodies buried in it]. 3. People will exclaim: *What happened to her? [Why is she telling everything that people did on it?]* 4. [They will exclaim because] on that day, [the earth] will narrate the accounts [of what the humans did on it so that they can be judged] 5. as your lord will tell her to do so.

Judgment

6. On that day [of judgment], humans will proceed [towards paradise or hell] divided into groups so that they could be shown [the results] of their deeds. 7. So he who has

⁶²Narrated by Abu Sa'id Khudri in Bukhari, Kitab: al-Riqaq, Bab: Sifat al-Jannata wa 'l-Nar, 6549; Muslim, Kitab: al-Jannata wa 'l-Sifata n'imha wa ahluya, Bab: Ihlas al-Ridwan, `ala ahl al-jannah

⁶³The great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi, *Mabda' va Ma`ad*, minha 31

done an atom of good will see its [result in paradise] 8. and he who has done an atom of bad will see its [hellish result].

100 The War Horses ('Adiyah)

Oath: By the War Horses

1.I swear by the [galloping] snorting war horses [of the warriors of God] 2. those speedy war horses whose [iron-shod hoofs] spark as they strike [the rock-strewn path at night] 3. those fleet war horses [who carry the warriors that charge at the center of the enemy ranks] at early dawn 4. raising dust 5. and penetrating the center [of the enemy line] in a swarm [crushing their defenses].

God Will Indeed Judge

6.Yes, some people are not grateful to their lord 7. Indeed, they realize it as well. 8. Certainly, people love wealth deeply 9. Does he not know? That whoever is buried in the grave will be brought out [on the judgment day] 10. and whatever that is hidden in their hearts will be revealed. 11. Their lord is certainly aware of what will happen to them on that day [of the imminent judgment].

101 The Day of Destruction (Qari`ah)

1. The day of destruction! 2. What is the day of destruction? 3. [My beloved prophet!] What do you know about the day of destruction? 4. On that day, man will become [insane in fear] like scattered insects [so frightened that they are self-immolating in the fire]. 5. and the mountains will [be crushed into powder that will] fly away like fluffed wool of many colors. 6. As for him whose good deeds weigh heavier on the balance⁶⁴ [than his bad deeds] 7. he will realize a pleasing life 8. and as for him whose good deeds weigh lighter on the balance, 9. his home will be the hell named 'the pit'. 10. Do you realize what [the 'pit'] is? 11. It is an intensely hot hell.

102 the Rat-race for Wealth (Takathur)

1. The rat-race for wealth obsesses you, [the impure humans] and makes you forget God 2. until you go to the grave. 3. It is not at all good [to be so engrossed in pursuing the world like that], you will soon find out 4. I emphasize, you will definitely find out. 5. I warn you. If you had assured knowledge [on the last world, you would not remain captivated] 6. Yes, you shall realize what the Gehenna is. 7. I stress. You shall see it with the 'eye of certainty' [i.e. with your own eyes.] 8. After that, certainly you will be interrogated on that day [of judgment] about God's blessings.

⁶⁴There will be many who will go to paradise without any weighing. That will include the sufi seekers of God. Imam Qurtubi wrote that everyone will not be weighed, one group will go to paradise without any weighing. So did Imam Gazzali. (TM) As my sufi shaykh explained, *We the sufis will enter paradise without going through any judgment. Judgment will for people who are not close to God while we are God's kith and kin. (IA)*

103 Aeon (Asr)

1. I swear by the aeon. 2. Certainly, man is in tremendous ruin 3. except those who believe, do good deeds and teach each other truth and perseverance.

104 Fault-finders (Humazah)

1.Cursed are all the fault-finders who blame people insultingly publicly or privately 2. who hoard money counting them over and over. 3. imagining that his money will make him live forever. 4. No! Never! [He will not live forever. Also, he must stop insulting people and being so greedy. Else, when he dies,] he will be thrown in hell. 5. And do you realize what the hell is? It is the fire of God 7. that will reach their hearts 8. Yes, it will confine them 9. inside tall flames.

105 Elephant (Fil)

1,[My beloved prophet!] Have you not seen how your lord dealt with the invaders on elephants? 2. Has he not destroyed their plot? 3. And he sent against them swarms of birds 4. who pounded them with pebbles of hardened earth 5. and then he made them like the grass [that the cattle had] chewed up.

When he heard about the invasion, Abdul-muttalib held the frame of the door of Kaaba, and entreated,

O lord! I do not seek for them anyone but you

O lord! So forbid them by your power

Certainly! The enemy of the house, they are your enemy

So forbid them from laying your land desolate

Ya rabbi! La arju lahumm siwaka

Ya rabbi! Fa-mna` minhum himaka

Inna `aduwwa `l-baiti man `adaka

Imna`hum an yakhribu quraka

106 Quraish (Quraish)

1. The Quraish are so fond of [journeying for trade]! 2. Indeed, they are fond of journeying in the winter and the summer. 3. So let them worship the lord of this house [Kaaba] 4. who has given them food in hunger 5. and who has kept them safe while in fear.

107 Small Things (Ma`un)

1.[My beloved prophet!] Have you seen him who denies the last judgment? 2. Even more, he abandons the orphans, 3. also he does not give food to the poor himself, let alone urge others to do so. 4. As a consequence, bad things wait for those worshipers who offer salat hypocritically, 6. and are inattentive in that salat 6. that they make to show off, 7. and [are so mean-spirited that they] refuse to help out with even small things.

108 Great Gift (Kawthar)

1. [My beloved prophet!] Yes, I have given you the great gift. 2. So [showing gratefulness,] offer salat to your lord and sacrifice your prized possessions [donating them to the orphans and the needy]. 3. I tell you, those who hate you are the ones who will not be remembered well.

109 Unbelievers (Kafirun)

1. [My beloved prophet!] Proclaim to [the Meccan idolaters]: *O you the unbelievers, 2. Never will I worship him whom you worship 3. and never will you worship him whom I worship 4. and never will I be his worshipper whom you worship 5. and never will you be his worshippers whom I worship. 6. For you is your worship and for me is a [great] religion.*

110 Help (Nasr)

BACKGROUND: It was revealed on the day of the peaceful conquest of Mecca when the idolaters were surrendering their weapons in droves and accepting Islam.

1. [My beloved prophet!] As the help of God and decisive victory [over the Meccan idolaters] has come, 2. and as you are seeing people entering God's religion in large numbers, 3. so proclaim the purity and glory of your lord along with praise, and seek his forgiveness. Indeed, he forgives the repentant.

111 Flame (Lahab)

1. May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined and he himself as well. 2. His wealth or whatever he has acquired shall not save him. 3. He shall soon burn in the blazing flames of hell 4. along with his wife. She will bear the heavy weight of her sins there 5. with an iron chain wrapped around her neck.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Alternatively, some exegetes say that Abu Lahab' wife used to carry firewood tied by a rope of palm-fiber (*masad*) and she died strangled by such a rope. Panipathi commented that she was a rich aristocrat and its hard to conceive that she used to carry firewood. (TM)

112 the Uncompromising Oneness of God (Ikhlas)

BACKGROUND: This sura was revealed in either Mecca or Medina when a delegation of non-believers came to the prophet and asked him about his God.

1.[My beloved prophet!] Proclaim to all: *He, God [Allah, Alaha, Elohim] is one*⁶⁶. 2. *He is indivisible*⁶⁷ 3. *Never does he father anyone and never has he been fathered, 4. and never does he have a peer --- in the past, present, or future.*

Samad means indivisible

The term *samad* has different meanings for different exegists but I prefer *indivisible* to be the right meaning, both from the context as well as its etymology. It comes from a Semitic root which appears in Akkadian as *samadu* which means to “connect, bind, harness together, etc.” It has similar meanings in Ugaritic and in Hebrew, it means “to grasp firmly, to be knit together.”⁶⁸ This word *tsamad* is used in Hebrew and Aramaic where distinct things were bound together, which would imply "unified" and the sense "indivisible". The meaning "tightly bound" fits with context. The word carpenter in old English is "joiner", which comes from Latin "jungere" meaning "to yoke, join" which is the same as the Semitic root *samad*. So possibly *samad* could mean carpenter, maker, creator, etc.

The Semitic root of *samad* is to join, yoke, bind together. The word *al-samadu* is nominative masculine singular noun. So depending on the inflexion, this means either: the tightly bound one or indivisible, bound only to himself or the self-sufficient, the one to which all is bound or the almighty, or one who binds or the maker. These and also the context leads one to interpret *samad* as indivisible.

God and the creation: One-and-all or distinct

God and his creation are indeed separate and distinct from each other. Due to their defective mystic vision, some sufi masters conceive God as a one with the creation --- they see God and his creation to be so intimately connected to each other that they cannot be distinguished from each other. sufi master Ibn Arabi proposed such a concept of God in his ontology named *wahdat al-wujud*.

Mansur Hallaj proposed a dualism but to him, the ultimate purpose of the sufi is to unite with God, as he composed,

I am he who I love and he whom I love is I
We are two spirits dwelling in one body
If you see me, you see him
And if you see him, you see us both

In contrast to them, the greatest sufi of all times, the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi proposed a

⁶⁶Pls see the section on God being one-and-all versus distinct from the creation.

⁶⁷The term *samad* has different meanings for different exegists but I prefer *indivisible* to be the right meaning, both from the context as well as its etymology. Please see the section on *samad*.

⁶⁸Nevo, Yehuda D. and Judith Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: the Origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003, p. 277

dualism where God and his creation is distinctly different. There the only interrelationship that man has with God is that man needs, depends, borrows from God. And that science that he found from his sufi mystic visions, it is completely congruent to the science of the Quran and sunna. (IA)

Existence of God: Ibn Arabi versus the Mujaddid

God is incomparable. The sufi master [the Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi, who have been blessed with the knowledge of the mysteries of God,] narrated that not a single thing shares a true partnership with God. And not a single thing has any similarity with God, neither in person, nor with any attribute, or the act of God. His attributes qualify his person, but those attributes are not the foundation of his person. Instead, his person can do all without needing any attribute.

Indeed, the primary one (asl) among all his attributes is his attribute of everlivingness (hayat) --- it is the mother attribute. It, the attribute of everlivingness, is before the rest of the attributes i.e. all-knowingness, all-powerfulness, desiringness, speakingness, all-hearingness, engenderingness [and all-seeingness] ('ilm, qudrat, iradah, kalam, sama', takwin, [basr]). All these attributes are corollaries of his person. And his person is a inscrutable mystery, it is the origin of his existence [or God exists by itself without needing any attribute of existence.]

It is with this understanding that the sufi masters say that the formula 'there is no god except Allah (la ilaha illaLlah)' means 'nothing exists but Allah (la mawjud illaLlah)' because nothing exists in the outside (kharij) except Allah.

The Great Mujaddid Ahmad Sirhindi radically changed his ontological ideas when he rejected zilliyat and adopted a newer doctrine, in a maktub written just before his death. Before, he proposed *zilliyat* as an ontology where the cosmos is the shadow of the person of God. And *wujud* is identical to the person of God. But as he explain in that maktub, he received even higher level knowledge from God and so he radically altered these ideas. Most scholars believe that the doctrine "cosmos is the shadow of God" or *zilliyat* is "the ontology" of the Mujaddid as they did not notice or understand that he radically changed his ontological ideas right before his death in a later maktub. Even the great master Qadhi Sanaullah Panipathi seems to have made the same mistake in the *Tafsir al-Mazhari* and so I am editing him here extensively and rewriting this section.

In his final doctrine, what is the existence (*wujud*) of God? Is existence identical to the person of God, as Ibn Arabi proposed? Earlier while in *zilliyat*, the Mujaddid agreed with Ibn Arabi on this matter but later he learned that there is another very important level of descent (*tanazzul*) or entification (*ta`ayyun*) above the five-descent (*tanazzulat-i khamsa*) system of Ibn Arabi, and that is the descent or entification into existence. While Ibn Arabi had proposed that existence is identical to the person of God, the Mujaddid denied it later. Instead, he proposed that existence is the creation of God that he created before the five entifications of Ibn Arabi.

Also, what else does exist in the outside? The Great Mujaddid explained that although before he proposed that the creation had shadow existence (*wujud al-zilli*), he rejected that based on his mystic knowledge that he attained at the more advanced stage. As he said in that final maktub on ontology, the creation indeed has an existence but it is created, contingent and newly-originated while God possesses

true existence. Ibn Arabi also proposed that cosmos has no true existence, it was a dream, but at the same time, he also proposed that since that existence is unable to sustain the cosmos, it “borrows” its existence from the existence of God.

Does the cosmos need to “borrow” its existence from God in order to exist, as Ibn Arabi proposed? No, it does not as the existence of the cosmos --- although it is a flimsy existence --- is sufficient to make the cosmos exist. It is because the cosmos does not need to exist as “strongly” as the existence of God as the attributes of contingent things [e.g. existence] relate to the attributes of the Necessary merely nominally, not truly. As the Quran says that the cosmos has no veritable existence: *That is because Allah, he is the fundamental reality (dhalika bi'annallaha, huwa 'l-haqq) (Q 22: 6)* and also *Everything perishes except the face of God (kullu shay'in halikun illa wajjahahu) (Q 28: 88)*.

Qadhi Sanaullah advises that those who fail to understand this, they should of attain the companionship of the sufis [like the Mujaddid] and realize inner knowledge *until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. However, it is sufficient for your lord that he is a witness over everything. (hatta yatabayyina lahum annahu 'l-haqq, awalam yakafi birabbika annahu 'ala kulli shay'in shahid) (Q 41: 53-54) (TM, IA)*

113 the Blazing Prison in Hell (Falaq)

1. [My beloved prophet!] Pray: *I seek refuge in God, the lord of the blazing prison in hell⁶⁹ 2. from the evil [of that prison] that he created⁷⁰, 3. from the evil of the moon⁷¹ as it wanes [plunging the world into darkness] 4. and from the evil of the witches as they cast spells 5. and from the evil of a envier as he covets.*

114 Humankind (Nas)

1.[My beloved prophet!] Supplicate: *I take refuge in the lord of humankind 2. the king of the humankind 3. the God of the humankind 4. from the evil of their whispering who retreat quietly [from chanting zikr of God in their hearts]⁷² 5. and whispers evil thoughts into the hearts of humankind 6. and are from the jinn and man.*

⁶⁹Several hadith reports confirm that *falaq* refers to a “blazing prison in hell, although lexically, it may mean 'daybreak', and also 'entire creation. (TM)

⁷⁰i.e. from the evil of the blazing prison in hell

⁷¹The term *gasiq* means the moon. In a hadith report by `A'isha, the prophet once held her hands while looking at the moon, and told her, `A'isha! Seek refuge in God from the harm of that *gasiq*, when it wanes (Astā'idhi bi-'lLahi min sharri 'l-gasiq idha waqab). (Bagibi) (TM)

⁷²By the term “those who retreat quietly,” God is referring to them whose hearts are not vibrating with a continuous, never-ending, silent zikr of Allah. The way to realize that zikr is to go to a competent sufi shaykh and learn from him the knowledge of the heart. Remember that the prophet said, *There are two compartments in the human heart. Angel dwells in one of them, and satan in the other. When man is absorbed in the zikr of God, satan retreats, and when he ceases that zikr, satan pecks at the heart of man with his beak. Thus he implants his evil suggestions in the human heart.* (Abu Yala narrates from `Abdullah ibn Shaqiq and Anas, quoted in TM). In the text, *al-khannas* (he who retreats quietly) qualifies *al-waswasa* (whispering) and that is the way of the satan, when the heart does zikr of God then he retreats quietly. (IA)